

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Coeur d'Alene Field Office
3815 Schreiber Way
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho 83814

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS

Mineral Ridge Fuels Reduction
DOI-BLM-ID-C010-2015-0003-EA

Finding

Based upon review of the environmental assessment (EA), I have determined that the Mineral Ridge Fuels Reduction will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required. As described and analyzed in the EA, no environmental effects meet the definition of significance as defined by regulations to implement NEPA found at 40 CFR 1508.27. This finding is based on my consideration of both the context and intensity of the project, as described below.

Context. This means that the significance of an action was analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the local rather than in the world as a whole. Both short-and-long-term effects are relevant.

Intensity. This requirement refers to the severity of impact. The following factors are considered in evaluating intensity.

1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

The project has been planned to include measures to avoid or reduce adverse impacts to affected resources, consistent with meeting objectives for forestry, watershed, wildlife/habitat management in the 2007 Approved Coeur d'Alene Resource Management Plan. As analyzed in Chapter 7 of the EA, the proposed fuels management treatments are expected to help attain desired future condition for forest vegetation (EA pages 13-16), and reduce the risk of a stand-replacing wildfire in the WUI (EA pages 13-16). No significant impacts on watershed resource (EA pages 39-40), special status aquatic, plant or wildlife species and their habitat are identified (EA pages 22-39).

2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.

The proposed activities would not significantly affect public health and safety. The purpose of the proposed action is to improve forest health by reducing fuels within the Mineral Ridge area. This would protect people, property, and legacy trees from wildfire, while retaining the recreational values and uses of the area. Fuels reduction activities would be conducted in a safe manner to protect the public. A minor impact for a short period of time may occur to local air quality from the prescribed pile burning. In addition, recreation may be disrupted for short

periods during project implementation. No treatments or other work will occur in drainages that provide domestic drinking water (EA page 39).

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

No historic or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, or wilderness occur in the proposed project area. No historic or cultural resources will be affected by the proposed action (EA pages 21-22)

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

An analysis of the proposed action and alternatives has been conducted using the best information available and the latest methods of analyzing data by professionals in their respected disciplines. The effects of the proposed alternatives on the various resources are not considered to be highly controversial by professionals, specialists and scientists from associated fields of botany, forestry, wildlife biology and management, fisheries, and hydrology.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The possible effects on the human environment are not highly uncertain nor do they involve unique or uncertain risks. The technical analyses conducted for determining the impacts to the resources are supportable with use of accepted techniques, reliable data, past experience, knowledge of the area, and professional judgment.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

Many similar projects have been conducted on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land in this region. The forest health conditions of today require active management. This project is not precedent setting for future actions and is not expected to have any significant effects. This action does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

This project is similar to activities that have or are taking place on adjacent BLM land and USDA Forest Service land. Timber harvest activities on adjacent private land have occurred and can be expected to continue and may be occurring for economic reasons as well as reducing fire hazard. The EA includes a cumulative impacts analysis of all similar and related past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions on affected resources, and no cumulatively significant impact on any affected resource is anticipated (EA pages 7-42).

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

There are no features in the area affected that are listed or are being considered for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (EA pages 21-22). A cultural resource inventory has been completed in the area, no cultural resources were located. The State Historic and Preservation Office (SHPO) consultation was completed and there were no significant findings.

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat that has been determined under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

The project was determined to have no effect on water howellia and Spalding's catchfly (threatened plant species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA)). No individuals, populations, or potential habitat of water howellia occur within the project area. Although suitable habitat for Spalding's catchfly is present in the project area, and on nearby BLM land at Blue Creek Bay and Beauty Bay, no plants have been found, despite numerous inventories of these grassland and woodland communities. Whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*; federal candidate) occurs on high elevation sites (>4,500 feet in northern Idaho) characterized by rocky, poorly developed soils, cold temperatures, and snowy, wind-swept exposures. No whitebark pine trees or habitat are present in the project area. Therefore, these species will not be affected (EA pages 34-39).

Lake Coeur d'Alene is designated critical habitat for bull trout and bull trout are known to inhabit the lake. Bull trout are unlikely to use any of the tributaries near the project area, though subadult and adult bull trout may use Wolf Lodge Bay and Beauty Bay for foraging and overwintering. The understory thinning, piling and burning is not expected to have adverse impacts on fish or aquatic habitat (threatened under ESA) (EA pages 9-13).

Although three federally protected wildlife species occur in north Idaho (Grizzly bear, woodland caribou and Canada lynx), none have been documented on the project site (EA page 22-34).

Consistent with BLM policy for special status species, the analysis of sensitive plant, aquatic and wildlife species that may occur in the action area did not anticipate that the proposed action would cause any species to be listed under the ESA.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

The action does not violate any Federal, State or local laws or permits imposed for the protection of the environment. Consistent with requirements for air quality, prescribed burning would be done in accordance with state air quality standards and within burning periods approved by the North Idaho/Montana Airshed Group. Best management practices would be used to protect water quality.

Signature

/s/

8/4/15

Kurt Pavlat
Field Manager

Date